

2018 I.F. SCHOLARSHIP

SKYTALK
2019



**\$1,000
WINNER**

Bryan Sousa
Lyndhurst, NJ

Lyndhurst High School - Grade 12
IF Member: Tony Sousa, Father
Club: Lyndhurst Homing Pigeon Club



Inspired By The Pigeons

How have homing pigeons changed your life? How didn't they change my life as I sit here in front of my computer asking myself. My life has evolved through the homing pigeon community from the minute I wake up every morning and pour myself a bowl of cereal and look out my kitchen windows and just see these amazing creations circling my house and landing on their homes. To the minute I am getting ready to go to bed and look out and see the pigeon coop lights on. (Quick little secret I always wondered if they talked to each other before bed time). Let me introduce myself my name is Bryan Sousa, I am an eighteen year old with a bunch of pigeons in my backyard as many people would say. Growing up so young with such a passionate father, having such a strong passion for racing pigeons, really opened my eye and taught me if you just have some type of passion and love for something that you will always have happiness in your life. No amount of money could bring you happiness but what does is, something you love and enjoy doing.

I will never forget the very first time I walked into the Lyndhurst Homing Pigeon Club who would thought there would be one right in my home town. I was so scared and shy that I would hide behind my dad's legs. I was only five what five year wouldn't be shy and scared. I never thought I would get over my shyness. Until the day I went for my first club member meeting and someone very special to me, grabbed me and put me on their lap and handed me a gavel. That person was Vinnie Torre the president of club or formally in my head uncle Vinnie. Uncle Vinnie has been there since day one showing me around the club. I was always a helper, I wanted to do everything there no matter what it was. I remember being 3 feet tall standing on the side of uncle Vinnie asking him, where do I put a mark on the pigeon counter on the holding crates on shipping night. How exciting it was to see all the members with all this excitement getting ready for the big day race day. Who was going to be the winner standing outside with my dad only hoping it would be him, just so I could see the biggest smile on my father's face. That was the best feeling to see my dad so proud and happy of his pigeons but to me the pigeons weren't just pigeons they were family to me.



Bryan Sousa
Lyndhurst, NJ

I remember going inside the pigeon coops and naming all my favorites like “Snow White”, “Princess”, and we can’t forget about my dad’s favorite “154”. From that day I knew I wanted to educate myself and others on the amazing community of racing pigeons. So I sat my dad down and asked him every question I could think of and then began working on a power point. At a very young age I was exposed into technically and has me the tech savvy person I am today. I told my dad that I needed to record a baby pigeon being born breaking through their little egg and being born into this amazing world. After I got all my footage and all my research was done and everything was ready and set to go. I asked myself what was I going to do with all this hard work I did. And light turned on in my head and I came up with why don’t I teach my school about the homing pigeon community. Walking into school that Monday morning I walked straight into the principal’s office with my little twelve inch laptop. And I said I want to teach the school about pigeons and he said what asking me confused looking me up and down most likely thinking what is this little third grader asking me right now. I grabbed my laptop and showed him, my power point and he was so impressed with what I came up with, he said he thought it was a great idea but for me to start with my class first, which I did. My teacher and I came up with a day and she gave me one hour to teach my class. As I began all the students looked at me very weird but the more I got into it, and started showing my videos the more they became fascinated on what I was talking about. And then the eighth grade English teacher walked into my class room during my prestation and asked my teacher what we were doing and she said Bryan why don’t you explain so I did, and she said that it was so awesome and asked me after if I could teach her class. I said sure but really in my head I was freaking out, because I was going to be talking in front of eighth graders.

I did that for the next two years with new kids coming into the school. I was a pro at this by then, and since then I been an amazing public speaker being able to speak in front of crowds and not being afraid. And I would like to thank the pigeons because without them being in my life I would never be able to be a part of such amazing community. When one does ask me how have pigeons changed your life I tell them this exact story and I never get tired of telling it. ▲

Congratulations Bryan... Great Job!

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Shannon V. Scanlon
Franklyn Square, NY

St. Johns University - Freshman

Member: Matthew Reilly (Grandfather) deceased
IF (Lifetime member)

Clubs: East Meadow Homing Pigeon Club
Long Island Combine

Member: Thomas R. Scanlon, Legal Advisor to IF



My Grandparents and Homing/Racing Pigeons

Generally, people tend to think of pigeons as a street bird that crowd the sidewalks and travel in large groups. To me, pigeons symbolize so much more. They symbolize my childhood, my family, hard work and friendships. Many are unfamiliar with the sport that is associated with pigeons. Pigeon racing is when homing pigeons are trained, then released hundreds of miles from their home, their time is tracked and the flyers with the fastest birds are declared the winner.

Pigeons have been in my life since the day I was born. My grandparents raced pigeons as a hobby, and I spent most of my weekends at their house, helping them with the pigeons or waiting for the birds to return home. During racing season, we would go to the diner every Saturday or Sunday, eat a good breakfast and then return back to their house and wait for the birds. We would set up outside, my grandpa sat by the table in his infamous chair, and my grandma and I would sit on the swinging bench. We would sit outside waiting for the birds, often my grandparents would let other birds that were not in this race out, so that I could play with them and feed them. When the first racing bird was observed, everyone would get into positions, my grandfather would make sure the birds landed correctly, and my grandma and I would look out for more.

My favorite part of the pigeon races was after all the birds had returned home. I would give them a bath and feed them. My grandfather would release all the birds out, including the birds that had not been in the race, so they all could fly and return. We would then clean them four at a time. I enjoyed cleaning the birds and loved seeing them shake the excess water off. I remember how their feathers would shine against the sun. Once we got them back into their coops, it was time for feeding. They would all rush to the board, once I walked into the coop.



2018 I.F. SCHOLARSHIP WINNER (CONTINUED)

Shannon V. Scanlon - Franklin Square, NY

There were quite a few pigeons that I had a special bond with, and I often named the pigeons. My favorite was Jack. He had a red hue to him and was one of my grandfather's best pigeons. He had won many of his races, and I will always believe he was good luck, because I had named him.

As I grew up, my relationship with pigeon racing got more hands on. I would go with my grandfather to New Jersey and Pennsylvania to release the birds for training. Without fail, every time the birds would be home before us. It still amazes me that the birds know how to get back home. I even began going to the International Federation (IF) Conventions. The IF Conventions consisted of members of lofts from all over. Their main objective for attending was a big race, but it was also a great way for people with the same passion to interact and make new contacts. I remember when I went to the IF Convention in Boston, there had been racers from all over the U.S. It shocked me how my grandfather knew so many people there, not just the ones in his clubs. Months before the convention, birds are sent to a local flyers house near the convention. Birds are then trained, and during the convention the birds are released and timed. Many members go to the local flyers house and wait for the birds.

Pigeon racing has helped shaped me into the person I am today. Like most sports, there is a lot to learn. It taught me that if you work hard, you will see that in the outcome, however if you just put fifty percent of yourself into something, you will not get the outcome that you desire. It also taught me that if you are competing against someone, it should not affect your relationship with them. My grandfather's best friend Richie also took part in the sport of pigeon racing. Whenever one of their birds came home, they would call each other so the other would be on the lookout. They would also travel together to train their birds. This showed me that you can work together and not against each other, even if you want the same end goal.

Lastly, pigeon racing brought me closer to my family. Without pigeons, I don't know what kind of bond I would have had with my grandparents. Pigeon racing allowed me to be at my grandparents every weekend, to be outside and to be entertained. It brought me closer to them and gave me memories that I will forever remember and cherish. ▲

Congratulations Shannon... Great Job!



We didn't have a Rookie of the Year for 2018. Please involve the youth in our great sport. Mentor a new flyer and help someone become IF Rookie of the Year! (form on page 71)

– Richie Smith, IF President –